

Partners Unite to Improve the Health of the Community at Outdoor Exercise Areas

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Summary

Although the Florida Department of Health in Pinellas County (DOH-Pinellas) had worked with other city and county governments on Fitness Zones outdoor exercise areas through its Partnerships to Improve Community Health (PICH) grant, a partnership with the City of Dunedin has been the most successful because the city saw the value of the project early to enhance a new park. The city, in turn, had a longstanding relationship with its Kiwanis Club that had already funded a very popular "spray ground" water park for children at another park. Together, all entities created a new community project that was more than the sum of its parts.

Challenge

Pinellas County is a tourist destination that is also the most densely populated county in Florida. It has 24 municipalities packed in 280 sq. mi. The adult obesity rate is 26 percent and the physical inactivity rate is 22 percent, despite 100 percent access to recreational facilities (Source: 2017 County Health Rankings). Pinellas' PICH grant looks for opportunities to leverage municipal and community relationships to move more adults toward active lifestyles. Its mission is to make fitness fun and easy for those who are inactive so that they can continue doing it. In 2016, PICH began working with the City of Dunedin to expand its Fitness Zones initiative by adding one at Weaver Park, the city's newest recreation area. This exercise area would be the first in the city and one of only two in the northern part of Pinellas.

Solution

PICH contributed \$25,000 to the Fitness Zone at Weaver Park, but Dunedin's leadership and recreation staff saw the benefit of the project and committed funding and resources to create an improved exercise area. Dunedin partnered with its Kiwanis Club to add an additional \$25,000 for more equipment, resurfacing and other amenities. With its municipal and community partners, PICH added another Fitness Zone in an area that had never had one. The three partners celebrated the dedication of the "Dunedin Fit Zone" with a public event in February 2017 that received positive media attention. Later in the year, Dunedin also funded a shade cover to help the equipment stay cool in the Florida sun.



Your Involvement Is Key
Creating strong relationships with community partners leveraged more "bang for the buck" for PICH funding in Pinellas. Throughout the process, partners provided feedback and support to create a Fitness Zone all could be proud of. The choice of location helped draw in active adults already using the trail for aerobic exercise. A large Kiwanis-funded playground opposite the Fitness Zone helps families make Weaver Park a place for people of all ages to be more active and have fun doing it.

Results

The partner-leveraged Fitness Zone at Weaver Park became one of the best used of the 16 such areas in Pinellas with hundreds of visitors each week. The city added bike racks, a bottle-refill station and a shade cover for its users' comfort. Some of the equipment meets Americans with Disabilities Act requirements for the differently-abled to use. The equipment selected by the city's fitness expert includes cardiovascular machines as well as strength machines. PICH filmed two public-service ads at Weaver Park because of its picturesque location bounded by the county's bike/pedestrian trail on the east and the Gulf of Mexico on the west. The city's recreation staff encourages adults to use it and its fitness specialist does demonstrations on the proper use of the equipment. The "Dunedin Fit Zone" was spotlighted by the city on its recreation magazine's cover as a successful project; a segment on the dedication continues to air on the city's government channel.

Contact

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"We built a circuit with equipment for cardiovascular and strength for a full-body workout. One of the things I'm really proud of is that some of the pieces are ADA-accessible."

- Rob Mirlenbrink, Dunedin Fitness Expert

Sustaining Success

Fitness Zones are permanent additions to parks. The equipment is sturdy and maintained by the city. With the support of the city and the Kiwanis Club, residents and visitors are encouraged to use it. The location of the Fitness Zone between the Pinellas Trail that has 70,000 users each month made it visible to those walking, running or cycling. Users say they combine aerobic activity on the trail with a stop at the Weaver Park Fitness Zone to improve their workouts. PICH is airing public-service ads on more than 50 movie screens in Pinellas to spotlight its Fitness Zones; two of the three ads feature this location. The city's buy-in with the Kiwanis continues to be a major factor in sustaining the project beyond the life of the PICH grant.

